

Press Statement by Drew G. Blakeney, Spokesperson,
United States Interests Section, Havana, Cuba,
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The Cuban people, especially human rights and pro-democracy activists, continue to suffer much more severe harassment on a daily basis than does the United States Interests Section (USINT) in Havana. The regime's increasing resort to bullying tactics in dealing with USINT and the Cuban people comes as no surprise: It has long sought to isolate and harass the Interests Section.

The regime's latest harassment includes the refusal to allow USINT to import vehicles; prevention of USINT hiring of Cuban personnel to work in maintenance, construction, or in any other capacity; intrusions into diplomats' homes; and failure to grant the majority of official U.S. government visa requests for personnel being assigned to work at USINT. Work at USINT continues uninterrupted, including the interviewing of visa and political asylum candidates, and direct outreach to the Cuban people. Normal procedures continue to apply to the treatment of classified materials at USINT.

Background:

On Monday, June 5, at approximately 3 a.m., electricity to the main building of the United States Interests Section (USINT) in Havana, Cuba was cut off. It appears that the USINT building was the only building in the neighborhood that was so cut off. Requests to the Cuban government to restore power have gone unanswered, and USINT continues to operate on generator power. The municipal supply of water to the USINT main building was turned off from February 22 to March 26, 2006, and water supply to the Refugee Annex has literally been a trickle for most of this year, although the flow increased recently. The water supply continues to be capricious, and the flow to the main building again stopped last week for three days.